

July 25, 1984

Mr. Victor Normand
Executive Director
Lowell Housing Authority
350 Moody Street
Lowell, Massachusetts 01854

Dear Mr. Normand:

As per the terms of my contract with the Lowell Housing Authority, I wish to inform the board of my progress to date in researching the history of public housing in Lowell.

During the period from June 4, 1984 to the present, I have twice read and made notes from newspaper scrapbooks, cross checking with the minutes of the board meetings and have referred to available housing authority records. I have conducted interviews with various officials, housing managers, maintenance supervisors, other L.H.A. employees, and tenants. I have written to Governor Dukakis, Senator Tsongas, Julie Mirras, and Marian McCartin requesting information but failed to receive a response from any of them. I have also encountered a deep reluctance on the part of many tenants and employees to speak freely.

I still intend to interview Armand Mercier and would like a composite or individual statement from you and the board members as to your hopes for public housing in the future. (See Section VII)

I have divided the paper into seven sections as follows:

- I. A New Idea Meets Opposition...and Triumphs
- II. Returning Veterans and the Problems of Expansion, Progress, and Age
- III. Growing Pains and Arthritis
- IV. The LHA and Urban Renewal
- V. New Concepts
- VI. New Immigrants - New Needs
- VII. A Look at the Future

I have written the final draft for sections I, II, and III. In section I, I briefly explain the Great Depression and the role of the New Deal in meeting the needs created by the economic crisis, extending it to the housing crisis of Lowell. I cover the LHA's creation and the efforts that were made both in support of, and in opposition to, Lowell's first project, North Common Village.

In the second section, I discuss the impact of World War II on public housing, including effects on income and housing needs. This period involved, of course, the building of temporary veterans' housing and its eventual demolition, the construction of the Julian D. Steele project, as well as the aging of Lowell's public housing units.

Section III includes the development of the George Flanagan project and Bishop Markham Village. At this time, the LHA also entered a new phase, housing for the elderly.

The period from the late fifties to the early seventies is less newsworthy than that prior to and following it. It was a time of stagnation, maintaining the status quo, with increased concern for urban renewal and less for multiple family housing. It was also a time of personality conflicts, dissension, and racial tensions. While all of this may be touched on for historical accuracy, to focus on these problems would distort the main purpose of the paper to chronicle progress in public housing. Therefore, I will devote less space to those years than to others.

I have approached this writing as a straight, factual historical text. It certainly would be more interesting reading to include the many colorful but sometimes bitter incidents and episodes that occurred over the last 47 years. However, to do so would require the naming of individuals involved in personality clashes, dubious political practices, etc., and while good reading, I question how germane they are to an actual history. If you wish me to take that direction in writing, this would be the time for me to make inserts in what I have in final draft and in future writing.

Your comments at this time would be appreciated.

Sincerely,

Julie M. Leney
Julie M. Leney

:jml

cc: Mary Blewett
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